2. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein [the hydrogel solution is hardened] said cell-polymeric composition hardens prior to [implantation in] introduction into the animal.

3. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the [hydrogel is injected] cell-polymeric composition hardens after introduction into the animal [as a cell suspension, which then hardens].

4. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the natural or synthetic organic polymer [hydrogel] is selected from the group consisting of alginate, polyphosphazines, polyethlene oxide-propylene glycol block copolymers, poly(acrylic acids), poly(methacrylic acids), copolymers of acrylic acid and methacrylic acid, poly(vinyl acetate), and sulfonated polymers.

5. (Amended) The method of claim [4] 2 or 3, wherein the cell-polymeric composition [hydrogel] is hardened by exposure to an agent selected from the group consisting of ions, pH changes, and temperature changes.

6. (Amended) The method of claim 5, wherein the cell-polymeric composition [hydrogel] is hardened by interaction with ions selected from the group consisting of copper, calcium, aluminum, magnesium, strontium, barium, tin, and di-, tri- or tetra-functional organic cations; anions selected from the group consisting of low molecular weight dicarboxylic acids, sulfate ions and carbonate ions.

7. (Amended) The method of claim 4, wherein the cell-polymeric composition [hydrogel] is further stabilized by cross-linking with [polyion] multivalent ions.

8. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the cells are selected from the group consisting of [chrondocytes and other] cells that form cartilage, [osteoblasts and other] cells that form bone, muscle cells, fibroblasts, and organ cells.

9. (Amended) The method of claim [1] 2, wherein [the hydrogel is molded to form a specific shape prior to implantation.] said cell-polymeric composition is introduced into a mold having a desired anatomical shape and hardened prior to introduction into the animal.

10. Please cancel claim 10.

11. (Amended) [A composition] An implantable medical device for [implanting tissue] introducing cells into an animal, said device being a cell-polymeric composition comprising: a [hydrogel solution] biodegradable, biocompatible natural or synthetic organic polymer, wherein the polymer is capable of hardening into a three-dimensional open-lattice structure which entraps water molecules to form a hydrogel mixed with dissociated cells, said cell-polymer composition being suitable for implantation into an animal.

12. (Amended) The composition of claim 11, wherein the [hydrogel solution is hardened prior to implementation in the animal] cell-polymeric composition is hardened into a desired anatomical shape.

13. Please cancel claim 13.

14. (Amended) The composition of claim 11, wherein the [hydrogel] natural or synthetic organic polymer is selected from the group consisting of alginate, polyphosphazines, polyethylene oxide-polypropylene glycol block copolymers, poly(acrylic acids), poly (methacrylic acids), copolymers of acrylic acid and methacrylic acid, poly(vinyl acetate), and sulfonated polymers.

15. (Amended) The composition of claim 14, wherein the [hydrogel is] cell-polymeric composition can be hardened by exposure to an agent selected from the group consisting of ions, pH changes, and temperature changes.

16. (Amended) The ~~composition~~ implant of claim 15, wherein the [hydrogel is] cell-polymeric composition can be hardened by interaction with ions selected from the group consisting of copper, calcium, aluminum, magnesium, strontium, barium, tin, and di-, tri- or tetra-functional organic cations; or anions selected from the group consisting of low molecular weight dicarboxylic acids, sulfate ions and carbonate ions.

17. (Amended) The ~~composition~~ implant of claim 14, wherein the cell-polymeric composition [hydrogel] is further stabilized by cross-linking with [polyion] multivalent ions.

18. (Amended) The ~~composition~~ implant of claim 11, wherein the dissociated cells are selected from the group consisting of [chronodocytes and other] cells that form cartilage, [osteoblasts and other] cells that form bone, muscle cells, fibroblasts, and organ cells.

Please add the following new claims:

19. (newly added) The method of claim 8, wherein the cells that form cartilage comprise chrondocytes.

20. (newly added) The method of claim 8, wherein the ~~cells~~ that form bone comprise osteoblasts.

21. (newly added) The ~~method~~ implant of claim 18, wherein the cells ~~that~~ that form cartilage comprise chrondocytes.

22. (newly added) The ~~method~~ implant of claim 18, where the cells that form bone comprise osteoblasts.

Remarks

With this amendment, claims 10 and 13 have been cancelled and claims 19-22 have been introduced. The amendments to claims 1-18 are discussed below. The new claims are